

July 31, 2002

Marlene H. Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
445 12th Street SW, TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Ultratec's Petition on CapTel - Docket 98-67

I cannot begin to tell you how much the CapTel telephone has meant to me. I use the CapTel both at home and work. I can honestly say I enjoy using the telephone again. It saves me so much time, especially checking messages or leaving a message with another person. For example, I would still be saying "Voice Carry Over, Please" (VCO) to have the operator change to VCO so that I could begin giving the information to the Relay operator by the time I quickly dialed a number and received a recorded message on my CapTel.

The CapTel offers people another choice and saves money. It reduces the number of operators needed by the State Relay service. The money saved this way could pay for the service of those who choose to use CapTel. I use the telephone a lot at work and some people do not wish to talk to me via the Relay, and this is not good for me. The CapTel could assist me and others like me to continue working. In this way, CapTel is helping the economy.

The CapTel is acceptable to so many people who lose their hearing later in life and to hearing people that receive a call from someone with the captioned telephone. Many of these people do not want to use the TTY or accept a call from the Relay Service from someone that is hard of hearing or deaf. They do not care nor have time for TTY calls, nor do they care to learn the special language that is needed for the TTY Relay calls such as "GA" and "SK". People with a hearing loss should not have to have two telephone lines and conference capability for VCO either.

The TTY should be replaced with more modern technology and of course is being replaced by Relay-IP. Yet, people who voice should not have to have another telephone and it is not effective with switchboard services. Relay-IP is still not as effective as a captioned telephone. CapTel is working on a captioned cell phone. The cell CapTel will give more people with a hearing loss more communication access.

Privacy is an important right and even with the confidentiality clause, relay calls are not really confidential. To this day I remember something that happened over 10 years ago. I was talking to my attorney through the Relay about the attempted murder on your life and thinking that the call was successful until the Operator made the comment "That must have been horrible." So much for confidentiality.

The CapTel is great because I can hear the person's voice inflection even if I do not understand the words. I do not have to have someone else decide "sounds mad" or "in a hurry". I know right away and respond in an appropriate way. I can hear the other person's voice which is important to me or I would not be calling the other person.

Acceptance, cost, choice, privacy, time saving, convenience, and hearing the other person's voice are important. Yet the most important advantage of the CapTel is my independence. Control is no longer with the Relay operator, the person receiving the call, or out of my hands. I decide when to speak, and when to cut in. I can ask for further explanations. I can change my mind. I am given more information to use before deciding what to say. No one else erases my telephone messages. I am responsible for retrieving my messages. This makes me feel much better, be less stressed and more independent, and a more productive person.

Linda M. Webb
725 S. Ann Street
Baltimore, MD 21231-3402
Webb@dhcd.state.md.us